

Intimacy with God: Enthroned, Robed and Crowned Elders (Rev. 4:4)

I. OUTLINE OF REVELATION 4 (REVIEW)

- A. Revelation 4 and 5 give us the highest revelation of God’s beauty in Scripture. They describe the Holy of Holies of the Eternal City. What our beautiful God put around Himself expresses His beauty to creation. I refer to Rev. 4-5 as the “beauty realm of God.” All the saints and angelic beings in this Governmental Prayer Center of the universe are empowered by God’s beauty.
- B. Rev. 4:1-7, describes 15 “doorways” into understanding God’s beauty around His Throne.
1. The ultimate reality: God’s life, Throne, and Person (Rev. 4:2)
 2. The beauty of God: what He looks like, feels like, and acts like (Rev. 4:3)
 3. The beauty of God’s partners: the Church enthroned, robed, and crowned (Rev. 4:4)
 4. The beauty of God’s power: manifestations of power (lightning, thunder, sounds (Rev. 4:5a)
 5. The beauty of the Spirit’s fire: on the Throne, the seraphim and the saints (Rev. 4:5b-7; 15:2)

² I was in the Spirit and...Throne set in heaven, and One sat on the Throne. 3 He...was like a jasper and a sardius stone...there was a rainbow around the Throne...4 Around the Throne were 24 thrones...I saw 24 elders...in white robes; they had crowns...5 From the Throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning... 6 Before the Throne was a sea of glass...around the Throne, were four living creatures... (Rev. 4:1-6)

II. BEAUTY OF GOD: WHAT GOD LOOKS LIKE, FEELS LIKE AND ACTS LIKE (REV. 4:3)

³ He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. (Rev. 4:3)

¹¹ Her (New Jerusalem) light was like...a jasper stone, clear as crystal. (Rev. 21:11)

Like a jasper stone (crystal), God radiates like a beautiful diamond in His translucent splendor. Like a sardius stone (deep red gem), He has fiery desire and burning passion as seen in redemption and judgment. Like an emerald rainbow, God’s covenant mercies cover all the activity of His Throne. Green is the color of life (plant life). The rainbow speaks of how God acts in tender mercy (Gen. 9:13-16).

III. BEAUTY OF GOD’S PARTNERS: ENTHRONED, ROBED AND CROWNED (REV. 4:4)

⁴ Around the Throne were 24 thrones, and on the thrones I saw 24 elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. (Rev. 4:4)

- A. John saw 24 elders ruling with God. The elders are faithful believers from redemptive history. The elders are ***enthroned*** as vessels of God’s authority (Rev. 3:21), they are ***robed*** with white robes referring to their priestly role and are ***crowned*** with golden crowns which speaks of God rewarding their deeds from this life. The elders are described in the terms that overcomers were just promised in Rev. 3, with white garments (3:5), crowns (3:11), and thrones (3:21). Here, we see our eternal inheritance and spiritual identity.

- B. After the Spirit revealed His jasper and sardius like glory to John (Rev. 4:3) then He showed him the glory of the redeemed (Rev. 4:4) in intimate partnership with God. The very fact that God desires to share His authority in partnership with us is an expression of His beautiful mind and heart. No other king would ever allow a throne to be near his. Yet, God insists on this for our glory. God's Court is beautified by these who were once His enemies but are now highly exalted.
- C. What happens with the 24 elders reveals God's ideal for each redeemed person. The honor, dignity and function of the 24 elders gives us insight into God's beauty. We see how far God is committed to go in expressing His sardius like passion toward us. Rev. 4:4 describes the high points in God's plan for the faithful. This plan has been burning in the heart of our beautiful God from before the world was created. This reveals what kind of God we serve.
- D. There are significant emotional implications to knowing that we are to be enthroned, robed and crowned in our destiny before God. We feel great security, dignity and beauty. When we "feel these truths" then we view God and ourselves differently and worship with all of our heart.
- E. The Lord raises the poor beggar from the ash heap to cause them to inherit the Throne of glory.
⁸ He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the beggar from the ash heap, to set them among princes and make them inherit the Throne of glory. (1 Sam. 2:8)
- F. The beauty God possesses is the very beauty that He imparts to His elders and all His people.
³ To give them beauty for ashes... (Isa. 61:3)
- G. God's beauty is seen in His great kindness in exalting His former enemies to such heights so as to reign as His Bride. We stand in amazement at how important our life is to God.
¹⁰ When we were enemies we were reconciled to God through...His Son. (Rom. 5:10)
- H. As we consider God's passion and wisdom in planning such a great salvation for us, we wonder, "Who else would have even thought of enthroning, robing and crowning a people like us?" Why has God done such extravagant things for us? He is a God of infinite kindness (Eph. 2:7).
⁴ God who is rich in mercy, because of His great love...⁶ He raised us up together, and made us sit (enthroned) together in the heavenly places...⁷ that in the ages to come He might show (openly manifest) the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us. (Eph. 2:4-7)
- I. Jesus longs that we be with Him to share the glory of His inheritance as King over all creation.
²² The glory which You gave Me I have given them...²⁴ Father, I desire that they...may be with Me where I am, that they may behold (experience) My glory. (Jn. 17:22-24)
- J. God has planned "so great a salvation" for us that includes crowning us with glory and honor. There are two different uses of God's glory. God will not give His glory to another, in the sense that He will not share the credit for His power nor allow any to be worshipped for being anointed with it. However, God will share His glory, in the sense of exalting His people in His goodness.

³ *How shall we escape (judgment) if we neglect so great a salvation... 7 You have crowned him (the redeemed) with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands...10 For it was fitting (made sense/was reasonable) for Him (the Father)...in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation (Jesus) perfect through sufferings. ... (Heb. 2:3, 7-10)*

K. God has raised up an excellent bride who is the glory of Jesus her heavenly Bridegroom.

⁴ *An excellent wife is the crown of her husband... (Prov. 12:4)*

³ *You shall also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. 4...You shall be called Hephzibah...for the LORD delights in you. (Isa. 62:3-4)*

L. The greatness of God's salvation for weak and broken people is indescribable in its glory.

⁹ *Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. (1 Cor. 2:9)*

¹⁹ *To know the love of Christ which passes knowledge (it is out of reach without the aid of the Holy Spirit); that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Eph. 3:19)*

IV. THE 24 ELDERS – FAITHFUL BELIEVERS FROM REDEMPTIVE HISTORY

A. The two main views of the elders are that they are either angels or humans. The majority see the 24 elders as the faithful from redemptive history who walked in victory while they were on earth.

B. In Scripture, angels are not described as elders, wearing crowns, or being enthroned, nor do they sing the songs of redemption (Rev. 5:9)

⁸ *When He (Jesus) had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb... 9 and they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll...for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood...10 and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth." (Rev. 5:8-10)*

C. The significance of the number 24 is in representing the priestly ministry. We see the heavenly Temple in Revelation. The tabernacle on earth was a "prophetic picture" of the heavenly reality. It was prophetically seen through the earthly types and shadows in the tabernacle of Moses, the tabernacle of David and the Temple of Solomon (Heb. 8:1-5; 9:23).

D. David understood that there was a heavenly reality that Israel was to reflect in the Temple.

¹¹ *David gave his son Solomon 12...the plans for all that he had by the Spirit, of the courts of the House of the LORD...13 also for the division of the priests and the Levites, for all the work of the service of the house of the LORD...19 All this," said David, "the LORD made me understand in writing, by His hand upon me, all the works of these plans." (1 Chr. 28:11-19)*

- E. The 24 elders is a literal number. The numbers 12, 24 and their multiples were used often in the OT Temple. For example, the priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, and captains were arranged according to 12 or 24. David organized the priests into 24 priestly divisions (1 Chr. 24:1-17, note: there were 16 divisions of the sons of Eleazar, and 8 divisions of the son of Ithamar totaling 24 divisions). There were 24 chief priests that led these 24 divisions of priests. David organized 24 Levitical gatekeepers at the gates, storehouse and highway (1 Chr. 26:17-19), and 24 orders of Levitical musicians who prophesied in praising the Lord by singing with lyres, harps and cymbals (1 Chr. 25:6-31). David established 288 singers in his Tabernacle (1 Chr. 25:7) which could be divided into 24 divisions of 12 each (24 x 12 = 288) or 2 large choirs of 144 each (2 x 144 = 288). He established 24,000 Levites to serve in the Temple (1 Chr. 23:3-6).

V. GOD SETS HIS PEOPLE ON THRONES

- A. The Lord desires that we be enthroned at the highest authority in the created order (Rev. 3:21). Jesus has planned an indescribable exaltation of His people. He will thoroughly cleanse them and empower humans who once lived in sin so they will be able to participate in His eternal government. God's great kindness toward us is seen in qualifying us to reign with Him.

²¹ *To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My Throne... (Rev. 3:21)*

- B. The elders were sitting not standing. To sit speaks of governmental rule. To sit in God's presence speaks of unspeakable honor and dignity.

- C. The 24 elders play a significant role in the administration of God's government and therefore, are prototypes of other saints on thrones who have a judicial function (Rev. 20:4). The saints with resurrected bodies who are counted worthy (*considered faithful*) during their life on earth will be made kings in the age-to-come (Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4-6; 22:5; Mt. 19:28; 20:21-23; 25:23; Lk. 19:17-19; 22:29-30; 1 Cor. 6:2-3; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rom 8:17).

⁴ *I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. I saw the souls of those...beheaded for their witness to Jesus...they lived and reigned with Christ for a 1,000 years. 6 They shall be priests of God...and shall reign with Him a 1,000 years. (Rev. 20:4, 6)*

- D. We are destined to live forever in the wealthy ruling class (aristocracy) of the New Jerusalem.

- E. The two functions most emphasized for the saints: priests and kings (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6).

¹⁰ *Have made us kings and priests to our God...we shall reign on the earth. (Rev. 5:10)*

- F. As kings, the saints will reign (rule) with judicial responsibility and authority. This role involves authority to evaluate the past (judging) and to determine action plans for the future for the people and areas that they are over. The ruling saints will appoint people into positions in the infrastructure that are within their sphere of Kingdom responsibility. This will include training and managing the people who are appointed. The saints will judge angels (1 Cor. 6:2).

² *Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?...the world will be judged by you... 3 Do you not know that we shall judge (evaluate) angels? (1 Cor. 6:2-3)*

VI. GOD PUTS PRIESTLY ROBES ON HIS PEOPLE

- A. The elders wear white robes, which speaks of their priestly role. The priests wore white garments (Lev. 6:10; 16:4). The priestly role includes worshipping, interceding and communicating God's heart to others. We are God's priests who best represent God forever and who mediate His glory to others in the age-to-come. God's humility shines brightly in choosing us to represent Him.

⁴ The LORD is high above all nations...⁵ Who is like the LORD our God, who dwells on high, ⁶ Who humbles Himself to behold the things...in the heavens and in the earth? (Ps. 113:4-6)

- B. White is the color of purity or holiness. Bright and clean linen was given to those who persevere or who overcome (Rev.3:4-5, 18; 6:11; 7:9, 13; 15:6; 19:8, 14).

⁸ And to her (Bride of Christ) it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. (Rev. 19:8)

⁵ He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments... (Rev. 3:5)

¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire...and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed... (Rev. 3:18)

- C. The 24 elders wear dazzling white garments that manifest their reward for faithfulness.

- D. Sinful people are made so clean they can draw near to God in intimate worship. They receive a purity that can stand in the presence of God's blazing holiness. They have the boldness to wear white in God's presence because they have the assurance that God accepts and delight in them.

VII. GOD SETS GOLDEN CROWNS ON HIS PEOPLE

- A. The elders wear gold crowns. There are two Greek words describing two different types of crowns in the New Testament. One is the crown of a ruler (Gr., diadem), the other was the crown of a victor (Gr., stephanos) who won a race in the Greek athletic games. The Greek word for crowns in Rev. 4:4 is stephanos which speaks of victor's crown rather than a king's diadem.

- B. The Greek word "stephanos" denotes a victorious athlete who won a race (not a political ruler).

¹...Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus... (Heb. 12:1-2)

¹¹ As sojourners...abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul... (1 Pet. 2:11)

- C. The 24 elders were rewarded for gaining significant victories over sin in their life. The angels are not rewarded for victory over sin, but are judged if they sin.

²⁴ Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize (stephanos crown)? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. 25 Everyone who competes for the prize (stephanos crown) is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but

we for an imperishable crown. 26 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty...27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. (1 Cor. 9:24-27)

- D. The elders wear golden crowns that will last forever. This is in contrast to the stephanos crowns that were won in the ancient world by the Olympic champions that were made of olive branches. Heavenly crowns are of gold and are eternal and incorruptible (1 Cor. 9:25; Phil. 4:1; 1 Thes. 2:19; 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pet.5:4; Jas. 1:12; Rev. 2:10; 3:11, 21; 4:4).
- E. Crowns in Revelation are given for endurance or perseverance and are only promised to victors or overcomers (Rev. 2:10; 3:11). These crowns of victory imply faithfulness and endurance.
¹⁰ *Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested...be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. (Rev. 2:10)*
¹² *Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved (found consistent), he will receive the crown of life...promised to those who love Him. (Jas 1:12)*
- F. Jesus wears many stephanos crowns (not diadems) because of faithfully enduring temptation.
¹² *His eyes were like...fire, and on His head were many crowns (stephanos) (Rev. 19:12)*
- G. Being crowned is a primary way in which the saints will be rewarded for faithfulness in this life. The crowns speak of one's accomplishments or acts done by the grace of God as a result of responding to Jesus in faith and obedience. The elders cast their crowns before God because their crown expressed their life of faithful and thus their reward in eternity.
¹⁰ *The 24 elders fall down...and cast their crowns before the Throne... (Rev. 4:10)*
- H. God esteems, remembers and rewards our works. All our obedience is forever remembered by God, therefore, our lives have great dignity even in the midst of the mundane and routine of life. He dignifies every righteous act in our life. Thus, the things we do in this life have significance forever. God repays all our obedience so well.